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THE

PATRIOT KING;

OR,

Alfred and Elvida.

A N

HISTORICAL TRAGEDY.

WRITTEN BY

ALEXR. BICKNELL,

AUTHOR OF

The Life of KING ALFRED;

The History of EDWARD the BLACK PRINCE, &c. &c.

EDITOR OF

CAPTAIN CARVER's Travels through the interior Parts of NORTH AMERICA;

AND

An Apology for the Life of GEORGE ANNE BELLAMY, &c.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Piece was written in the year 1778; and, as the kingdom was at that time threatened with an invaſion from the united powers of France and Spain, its effect, had it then been brought on the Stage, muſt have been greater than at any other period.

The flattering commendations of ſome of the firſt Tragic Performers, and the ſolicitations of ſeveral of his Friends, whoſe judgement in theatrical concerns is undoubted, have induced the Author, as he has not been ſo happy as to find it meet with the ſame favourable reception from the Managers of the Theatres, to lay it before the public;—and to their candour he ſubmits it.

MARCH, 1788.

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PROLOGUE.

Written by the AUTHOR of the PIECE.

OUR Bard, to night, though other Scenes, perchance,
The new-tranſlated Drama, warm from France,—
Or flimſey Equivoque—or meteor Wit—
The preſent lighter Taſte might better hit;
Diſdaining ſuch trite Modes, attempts to pleaſe
By ſcenic Traits, far different from theſe—
Would, while he charms, the Moraliſt aſſume;
From Hiſtory's pure Page the Mind illume;
By Scenes reviv'd, from ALFRED's halcyon Days,
(Whoſe well-conducted Reign exceeds all Praiſe)
At once would fan fair Freedom's ſacred Fire,
And with Reſpect for Rule the Heart inſpire;
Thoſe rare Examplers, for your Guidance bring,
A patriot People, and a patriot King:
And while he paints the Scene, he would create,
In ev'ry Breaſt, a Wiſh to emulate;
A Wiſh, to make their Happineſs your own,
And find your Weal reflected from the Throne;
To tyrant Pow'r, though tremblingly alive,
Or loſs of Liberty would ſcarce ſurvive,
The Laws with duteous Fervour to obey,
And bow ſubmiſſive to a gentler Sway.
Thus may Britannia's Sons again renew
The glorious Scenes here pourtray'd to their View;
The envy'd Height ere long they may attain,
And GEORGE's rank with ALFRED's happy Reign.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ALFRED, *the Anglo-Saxon King.*
ETHELRED, *a Saxon Earl, Father of Elvida.*
ODUN, *Earl of Devon.*
EDWYN, *a Young Saxon Nobleman.*
HALDANE, *the Daniſh King.*
GOTHRUM, *a Daniſh Chief.*
Saxon Noblemen, Troops, Attendants, &c.

ELVIDA, *Alfred's Queen.*
EMMA, *Daughter of the Earl of Devon, Elvida's Attendant.*
GUNHILDA, *the Daniſh Queen.*

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.
MAGICIAN.
WITCH.

The SCENE *lies chiefly in the Weſtern parts of England, termed by the Saxons, the Kingdom of Weſſex; ſometimes in the Daniſh Camp, at others in the adjacent Country. For a ſhort Time it is transferred to Norway.*

THE PATRIOT KING.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The Daniſh Camp.*

Enter HALDANE, GOTHRUM, *and Troops.*

Flouriſh of Trumpets.

HALDANE.

THANKS to the northern ſeer, the day is ours!
This earneſt of ſucceſs bouys up my hopes,
And gives aſſurance of his promis'd aid.
Theſe chriſtian dogs ſhall bend beneath our yoke,
And all their fertile iſland own our ſway—
Haſt thou, my Gothrum, given command to bear
The ſpoil and trophies of our victory
To the ſecureſt part of our encampment?

GOTHRUM.

I have, my Liege; already they approach.—
Among the pillage of their camp we found
A jewel of more worth than all their gold.
It ſparkled thro' the horror of the ſcene,
And fix'd my wand'ring eye; which ne'er before
Imbib'd the luſtre of ſo rare a gem.

HALDANE.

Produce the jewel you ſo matchleſs deem.

[*Elvida, Emma, and other Priſoners led in.*

GOTHRUM.

See where ſhe comes, like the reſplendent ſun
Faintly obſcur'd by a ſoft vernal ſhow'r.
Behold the vanquiſh'd Alfred's wife. Behold
The choiceſt produce of this fruitful land.

HALDANE.

Radiant and rare, indeed! I oft have heard
The beauties of the Saxon queen extol'd;
But find her charms as far exceed report,
As worſhip'd FRIGA's, would the ſun-burnt Ethiop—
Now Alfred will I conquer thee again:
I'll triumph o'er thee in Elvida's arms;
And ſatiate both my vengeance and my love.
Be it thy taſk, my Gothrum, to prepare
A caſket worthy of ſo rich a gem.
Conduct her to a tent far from Gunhilda's,
And when the buſineſs of the day is done,
I will devote an hour to love and her.

GOTHRUM.

I go, my Liege, to execute your will—
I muſt obey theſe abſolute commands; [*Aſide.*
But ſhall I tamely yield my lawful ſpoil?
Forbid it THOR, and every direful God.
[*Exeunt Gothrum, Elvida, and Captives.*

HALDANE. [*As Elvida paſſes.*]

Heav'ns what a graceful air! how fine her ſhape!
What a rich harveſt of luxuriant beauties
Wanton in that ſweet face!—Even my heart,
Unus'd to ſoft ſenſations, owns their pow'r,
And revels in anticipated bliſs—
But her majeſtic port, and that conſpicuous
Innocence in which ſhe's ſhrouded,
Seem to inſpire a momentary awe.

Enter an OFFICER, *leading in* ETHELRED *captive.*

OFFICER.

Behold another priſoner of note!
Earl Ethelred; the father of the Saxon queen.

HALDANE.

Lead him away to inſtant execution—
Yet hold! the father of the Saxon queen
Saidſt thou? I will awhile ſuſpend the blow:

His

His life may purchaſe for me ampler good—
Thy fate depends on future incidents—[*To Ethelred.*]
Secure him in the camp, and guard him well.

ETHELRED.

I neither fear thy threats nor court thy ſmiles.
Safe in the juſtice of my country's cauſe,
And fighting only to avenge her wrongs,
I'm arm'd againſt the worſt thou canſt ordain;
And meet, with equal mind, torture, or death. [*Exit.*

HALDANE.

Having conform'd to our accuſtom'd rites,
And ſacrific'd to THOR and warlike WODEN,
We'll ceaſe our toils; and at the well-ſpread board
Recruit our ſtrength exhauſted in the field:
And while the chearing cup goes briſkly round,
The bard ſhall celebrate this auſpicious day. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *The Tent of the Daniſh Queen.*

GUNHILDA *and* GOTHRUM.

GUNHILDA.

Fair didſt thou ſay? Repeat again thy tale.
Thou ſurely viewd'ſt them with a jaundic'd eye,
And fancied tenderneſs where none was meant.

GOTHRUM.

Believe me, madam,
No jealous fancies tincture my report.
As ſhe approach'd, I ſaw his fixed eyes
Dwell on the wonders of her beauteous face.
The glow of fury, lighted by the battle,
Had juſt ſubſided; but the new-born flame
Impell'd thro all his veins the ſanguine tide,
And ſtain'd his viſage with a deeper dye.

GUNHILDA.

I tell thee Gothrum, 'twas not love but rage.
The havock made to-day by Alfred's arm,

At ſight of her, renew'd on his remembrance,
Kindled afreſh his juſt expiring fury.

GOTHRUM.

If thus his looks miſled, his words you'll find
Too ſure betrayers of his captur'd ſtate.
He order'd me to rear for the fair queen
A ſtately tent, far diſtant from your own.
And as I led her off, I heard him vent
In broken and unuſual ſentences,
Such as ill ſuit the rugged heart of Haldane,
The paſſionate effuſions of his love.

GUNHILDA.

Spare thy recital, Gothrum, leſt thy tale
Impels with equal violence my blood;
And rouſes in my breaſt a ſwarm of fears
Whoſe pointed ſtrings fatally wound my peace.

GOTHRUM

I wiſh not to give pain; but duty bids
That theſe unpleaſing truths I ſhould impart.

GUNHILDA

Yet wherefore do I dread a captive rival,
Or doubt my empire over Haldane's heart!
I cannot think ſo meanly of thoſe Charms,
Which once could animate contending Princes,
And ſet the northern hemiſphere on fire—
But if I find it true; if ſhe has pow'r
To bind in willing chains the Daniſh King,
Let them beware—my fury knows no bounds;
And ſure deſtruction ſhall o'ertake them both—
Watch Gothrum; watch them with ſuſpicious eyes;
And further prove thy duty to Gunhilda
By aiding her Revenge.

GOTHRUM.

Duty alone, excluſive of my wrongs,
Would urge me to obey Gunhilda's will:
But when theſe add their ſtrenuous excitements,
When I reflect on the rich prize I've loſt,

By conqueſt and the rules of plunder mine,
(For this right arm, out-ſtripping Haldane's might,
Firſt hew'd a way thro Alfred's choiceſt troops,
Firſt reach'd his camp, and ſeiz'd the beauteous queen)
You need not doubt my vigilance and zeal.

GUNHILDA.

I will not doubt it—

ATTENDANT.

The King approaches.

GUNHILDA.

'Till I have further proof, I will ſuppreſs
The riſing ſtorm; aſſume the ſmile of joy,
And meet the King with well diſſembled eaſe.

Enter HALDANE.

Welcome my Haldane from th' enſanguin'd Field.
Gunhilda glories in her Lord's ſucceſs,
And meets with joy the conqueror of England.
I have already heard, and heard with rapture,
Th' atchievements of the Danes; thy matchleſs deeds;
The havock made among theſe Iſlanders;
And in idea drank of chriſtian blood.

HALDANE.

Thanks to the ſpells of the Norwegian ſeer,
Who bleſs'd our voyage, and ſhielded us with charms,
We are unhurt. Thanks to our hardy troops,
Who with unerring aim dealt death around,
Theſe Iſlanders by thouſands bite the earth;
And num'rous captives well repay our toil.

GUNHILDA.

This alſo have I heard—The Saxon queen
I find adds to the trophies of the day.

HALDANE.

She does; and with her many priſoners
Of rank—But the diſpoſal of our ſpoil
Demands my care; therefore I muſt away.

GUNHILDA

GUNHILDA.

Why this unuſual haſte? the time has been
When you have joy'd to tell the pleaſing tale;
Dwelt on each act, and realiz'd the ſcene.

HALDANE.

This muſt employ ſome future hour—Gothrum!
The buſineſs of the day is yet unfiniſh'd.

GUNHILDA.

Say Haldane! is the captive queen ſo fair
As we have heard her oft deſcrib'd? does ſhe
Unrival'd ſhine; and bear the palm from all
Our northern dames?

HALDANE.

Her charms have paſs'd unnotic'd by my eye.
Far other cares employ my thoughts. Conqueſts
And feats of arms alone engroſs my heart—
Gothrum! the ſun declines; we muſt away—
Adieu, Gunhilda. And when war's alarms
Subſide, and yeild to gentler employments,
I will devote more time to love and you.

[*Exeunt* HALDANE *and* GOTHRUM.

GUNHILDA.

Farewell!——
And from this hour I bid farewell to peace.
Th' alarms of war ſhall never more ſubſide;
Nor calm enjoyments, Haldane, be thy lot—
I notic'd well the movements of thy mind;
Mark'd thy impatience, and thy mean evaſions;
Thro' the tranſparent veil view'd thy falſe heart,
And ſaw depictur'd there the Saxon queen—
Henceforth, avaunt deceit! Gunhilda's ſoul
Scorns th'ignoble covering: nor will ſhe wear
A form her anceſtors would bluſh to own—
'Till I regain thy heart, unfaithful King,
I am thy foe; and will obliterate
Each trace of former kindneſs from my breaſt—
Elvida! I am doubly ſo to thee,
My rival both in empire and in love—

Ye

Ye demons of revenge! be you my guides;
Inſtruct me in your moſt malignant arts,
And aid me in my direful purpoſes. *Exit.*

SCENE III. *The Country. An Wood adjacent.*

Enter ALFRED, *eſcaping from the Battle. A Storm, with Thunder and Lightening.*

ALFRED.

Oh! what a night for royalty to rove
O'er pathleſs plains, unſhelter'd and alone!
From jarring elements th' encircled brow
Meets no reſpect; nor can the ſtudded crown
Guard from the peltings of the ireful clouds—
'Tis not the gloomy horrors of the night,
Nor yet the ſtorm which rends the welkin thus,
That can appall my ſtedfaſt ſoul:
The vivid lightning's gleam, replete with death,
Nor the hoarſe thunder's terrifying growl,
Can daunt the mind in conſcious virtue bold:
But oh my country! my much-lov'd England!
The ſtorm that ſpreads its terrors o'er thy plains
Rends with convulſive pangs thy ſov'reign's heart—
Thy barb'rous foes, like a deſtructive flood,
Deluge thy lands, and ſweep thy wealth away.
The ſtately fabric I have toil'd to rear,
Sacred to juſtice, liberty and peace,
Is tumbled from its baſis; and o'erthrown,
In ruins lies: while their attendant bleſſings,
Nurtur'd with ſo much care, and wide diffus'd
Throughout the Iſle, are blaſted to the root—
My ſcatter'd flock, a prey to rav'nous wolves,
Needing their ſhepherd's care, unfolded ſtray—
My dear Elvida too, torn from my arms—
Diſtracting thought!—Forgive, fair excellence,
If in my kingdom's wrongs enrapt, I gave
Thy loſs a ſecond place among my woes;
Thy image ſtands not ſecond in my heart;
There twin'd with England's thy idea lies—

And

And ye ſweet pledges of our mutual love,
Where will your innocence protection find!—
Be calm my ſoul; nor impiouſly repine
At the immutable decrees of heav'n,
Which means by theſe viciſſitudes to prove
Thy untry'd virtues, and thy boaſted love—
Ye powers who deign to guard the humble heart,
Lend me your aid! Since force will not avail,
I muſt give way to the impetuous Dane,
And wait the riſe of more auſpicious ſtars.
Teach me each wile, each lawful ſtratagem,
To counteract and drive theſe robbers hence.
No ſtate will be too ſervile, no diſguiſe
Too mean, to hide me from ſuſpicion's glance;
To forward the great purpoſe of my ſoul.
The tatter'd veſt, or humble ſhed, can ne'er
Depreſs the mind intent on glorious deeds. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV. *The ſame.*

ODUN *enters wounded, ſupporting himſelf with a ſpear.*

ODUN.

Ah! whither is my royal maſter fled?
Thus far, with eager eye, and anxious heart,
I've traced his ſteps, and feebly crawl'd along.
But that my mangled limbs refus'd their aid,
I could e're this have join'd him.—Thou godlike man!
Some pow'r unſeen nerv'd thy puiſſant arm,
And ſurely gave thee more than mortal ſtrength—
Like Mars himſelf he ſtood, entrench'd in blood,
Amidſt a hoſt of proſtrate vanquith'd foes.
The Danes, aſtoniſh'd, dar'd not to advance
Within the reach of his deſtructive ſword,
Till numbers urg'd them on—And when, at length,
His leſſen'd force no longer could withſtand
The preſſure of their deep embattled ranks,
With tardy ſtep, and unaverted face,
He left the well-fought field. Nor, till he ſaw
His faithful veterans breathleſs ſtrew the ground,
Thick as the foliage by th' autumnal blaſt,

Would

Would he retire from the unequal combat—
The tumult parted us; ſince which I've ſtrove
To join his much lov'd ſide—I ſaw him ſeek,
Directed by the lightning's tranſient gleam,
The leafy covert of this friendly grove.
Perhaps retarded by the entangled brake,
Or by the mazes of the pathleſs wood,
I yet may overtake, and ſhare his flight.

Enter ALFRED.

ALFRED.

This thorny labyrinth obſtructs my progreſs.
I muſt ſeek out a leſs impervious track.

ODUN.

And doſt thou bleſs my ſight, my honour'd lord?
Do I once more behold thee, and unhurt?
Thanks to the gracious pow'rs that have preſerv'd thee.

ALFRED.

Welcome to Alfred's arms, my gallant friend!
I am indeed unhurt, but grieve to ſee
Thy precious blood thus flow—Lean upon me,
And I will ſeek for thee ſome ſafe retreat.

ODUN.

Think not of me; my ſand is almoſt run;
But fly my liege, the barb'rous Danes are near;
Fly and reſerve yourſelf for happier days.
Your wretched country demands this care;
Eldvida too requires it at your hands.

ALFRED.

Thou haſt awaken'd, Odun, in my breaſt
A thouſand apprehenſions by that name.
What tortures rack my ſoul when I reflect
On the events of this ſad day! But moſt
When memory, too faithful to its truſt,
Preſents her lovely image to my view,
Captive, forlorn, bound with diſgraceful chains—
Shall it be ſaid that Alfred left her thus,
And fled to ſave a life of little worth

Since robb'd of that which only gave it value?
No, Devon; I'll return, and ſtrive to find
A faithful few, and reſcue her, or die.

ODUN.

Form not, my lord, ſuch deſperate reſolves;
Nor hope t' atchieve impoſſibilities.
What mortal arm could do for her defence
Yours has perform'd: No more can be requir'd.
Therefore reſume your wonted moderation,
And leave th' event to heav'n.

ALFRED.

Can I be calm
When I remember in whoſe hands ſhe is?
A lawleſs raviſher; fierce, uncontroul'd;
Who owns no ſway but his deſpotic will—
What may not helliſh art, or power effect?
Ere now the hapleſs fair one may be dragg'd
Feeble and weeping to the tyrant's bed—
Do I ſurvive the agonizing thought!—
Ye heavenly guardians of connubial love!
Protect her from the ruffian's foul attempts;
Reſtore her unpoluted to my arms—

ODUN.

Fear not but that the pow'rs you ſupplicate
Will lend a gracious ear to your requeſts.
The preſervation of your valu'd life
Be your firſt care; and humbly hope the reſt.

ALFRED.

I am again reſign'd, and will purſue
The path my faithful monitor points out—
Yes! we may yet drive theſe invaders hence;
And ſide by ſide revenge this fatal day.

ODUN.

For you alone is this great work reſerv'd.
My life is almoſt ſpent; my blood flows faſt—
Since 'twas deny'd me in the field to die;
Here will I lay me down, and breath my laſt,
Where moſt I wiſh, at my lov'd maſter's feet.

Talk

ALFRED.

Talk not of dying, Odun,
While ſuch a glorious taſk lies yet before us.
Baniſh'd be ev'ry thought that breeds deſpair—
Come on—I'll lead thee to ſome ſhepherd's cot,
[*The Moon riſes.*
(The friendly moon will light us on our way)
Where I will ſearch thee out ſalubrious herbs
To eaſe the anguiſh of thy bleeding wounds.
Lean upon me; the heavieſt burthen's light,
When friendſhip and humanity unite to bear it. [*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A Pavilion.*

ELVIDA *and* EMMA.

ELVIDA.

OH! Alfred! Alfred! Oh! my much-lov'd lord!
How ſhall I bear this ſad reverſe of fate?
Or how ſuſtain a wretched load of life,
Bereav'd of thee its animating ſun?
Oh! they have cleft my heart, and torn away
The better half—pluck'd each blooming hope,
And planted in their ſtead miſhapen fears—
Unnumber'd apprehenſions rack my ſoul—
I dread the fierceneſs of this Pagan king.
He ſeem'd to view me with impaſſion'd eye—
But wherefore do I thus lament my woes,
Or dare beſtow one thought upon Elvida,
Whilſt Alfred's weightier fate remains unknown,
And holds my mind in torturing ſuſpence!—
Perhaps ere now his foes have laid him low,
And blaſted England's happineſs and mine.

Talk

Methinks I see his mangled corse; that form
Whose symmetry attracted ev'ry eye,
Like Hector's, dragg'd around their camp, at once
The sport and dread of shouting infidels.

EMMA.

Give not thus way to unavailing tears,
Nor fashion to yourself uncertain evils.
Let hope, the only balm for tort'ring cares,
Spread its soft influence o'er your wounded mind,
And keep you from despair—Rather suppose
The prudent king has sav'd himself by flight;
Wisely preserving his important life
For future conflicts with these lawless Danes.

ELVIDA.

Can such excess of grief as mine be mute?
Lest my heart burst I give my sorrow words—
No common mortal, Emma, claims these tears.
When Alfred's godlike frame was fashion'd,
The forming hand mistook the just proportion,
And for a moment lavish in th' extreme,
Inclos'd in one of nature's fairest moulds
A double portion of celestial essence.
Heav'n and myself alone, (tho' all the world
Acknowledge his superior excellence)
Can truly estimate his worth—Shall then
My lamentations not exceed the bounds
Prescrib'd for common woes by rigid reason?
They must, they will have way—Oh! could I find
Words that would speak my loss and his desert!

EMMA.

Be patient, Madam; and preserve a life
That yet may be demanded by your Alfred—
My duteous heart, attendant on your grief,
Forgets its own; almost forgets its Edwyn.

ELVIDA.

Alas, poor maid! has thy young heart receiv'd
A guest, who mingles with the joys he brings
Restless

Reſtleſs anxieties, and unceaſing cares?
Haſt thou an abſent lover to bemoan?

EMMA.

Forgive me, Madam, if till now I've kept
The ſecret lock'd within my lab'ring boſom,
I oft have liſten'd to Lord Edwyn's vows,
And heard with pleaſure his ſoft plaintive tale;
But never knew before how much I lov'd.
Anxiety now racks my tortur'd mind,
And gives captivity a deeper gloom.

ELVIDA.

Edwyn deſerves thy love. He is a youth
That Alfred much eſteem'd; for in his breaſt
Concenter many virtues. Therefore, my Emma,
If ever heaven ſhould unite thee to him,
Let truth and conſtancy attend thy vows;
And may thy fate be happier than mine.

EMMA.

Your approbation, Madam, throws a ray
Of comfort o'er my ſoul. If e'er we meet,
I'll ſtrive to imitate your great example,
And learn fidelity and Truth of you.

ELVIDA.

Thy tale has for a moment lull'd my grief;
But it returns with renovated force.
All meaner thoughts give way to Alfred's fate.
In that is ev'ry other care abſorb'd.
Oh! Alfred! Alfred! [*Throws herſelf on her couch.*

Enter Attendant Spirit, inviſible to ELVIDA *and* EMMA.

Attendant Spirit. [*Aſide.*

When adverſe ſtorms impetuous roll,
And troubles overwhelm the ſoul;
When hope forſakes the human breaſt,
By fell deſpair and grief oppreſt;
When life a gloomy aſpect wears,
And not one friendly ray appears;

The

The guardians of the choſen few,
That virtue's rugged paths purſue,
Are in this dreadful hour near,
Their drooping, care-worn hearts to chear;
Unſeen, admoniſh'd, or ſuſtain,
And reſcue them from mental pain—
I'm ſent to aid this ſuff'ring fair,
Who deſerves heav'n's choiceſt care;
And in melodious ſtrains convey
(Such as will chaſe deſpair away)
Admonitions ſage and holy;
To ſanctify her melancholy.
Remind her of the ſource whence comfort flows,
And give the only balm for human woes.

AIR. *Soft Muſic accompanied by Flutes.*

Unhappy mortal! wouldſt thou know—

[ELVIDA *and* EMMA *appear to be greatly alarmed, and look wildly round.*

ELVIDA.

Ye gracious powers!—Whence theſe melodious ſounds!

EMMA.

O all ye ſaints look down! Protection grant.

ELVIDA.

The ſtrains are too angelic to proceed
From any being that can mean us harm.
Fear not then, Emma; but with awe attend.

[*Attendant Spirit continues to ſing.*

Unhappy mortal! wouldſt thou know
From whence tranquility can flow?
To hope and confidence in heav'n,
The ſoothing pow'r is only giv'n.
When cares perplex, and ills ſurround,
Religion to her vot'ry brings
A balm that heals the rankling wound,
From her ſweet conſolation ſprings.

She

She to the mourning captive freedom gives;
Thro' her the ſick recovers health;
For future victories the vanquiſh'd lives;
The indigent is bleſt with wealth.
Hope humbly then, and ſafe in this retreat,
Await the inſcrutable decrees of fate.

ELVIDA.

Thanks heav'nly monitor! I will await,
Without repining, the decrees of fate.
And firm in conſcious innocence, abide
Its moſt ſevere attacks—Why did I doubt
That ſuff'ring virtue would receive ſupport
From miniſt'ring angels, if occaſion were!
Permit, oh friendly guardians of mankind,
Permit me ſtill to beg your kind protection
Thro' ev'ry trial yet decreed to prove
My reſignatien to the will of heav'n.
Proportion to my ſtrength the important conflict;
But whate'er's my lot, ſhield, ſhield my Alfred.

Attendant Spirit. [*Aſide.*

Thy ſuit is wafted to the throne
Of the moſt high: from whom alone
(Great ſource of good) each bleſſing flows,
And who alone can calm thy woes—
Already 'tis allow'd. I ſtill
(Such is our bounteous ſovereign's will)
To aid thy feeble pow'rs remain;
For virtue never ſues in vain—
But I muſt keep aloof; as near
Something unholy taints the air.
Luſt, fierceneſs, cruelty, and pride,
Scatter their baneful ſavour wide;
And all intercourſe forbid
With purer ſpirits: who, tho' hid
From the keeneſt viſual ray,
Haſte from their influence away.
Yet will I hover round thee, virtuous fair,
And make thy welfare my peculiar care. [*Retires.*

EMMA.

EMMA.

Madam! the Daniſh king.

ELVIDA.

At this dread hour?
Then are my fears confirm'd—Guard me, kind heav'n!

Enter HALDANE *and* GOTHRUM.

HALDANE.

While viſiting this quarter of my camp,
I wiſh'd to know, fair queen, if aught was wanting
To make your new captivity ſit light.
My orders were that you ſhould be, in ſtate,
In ev'ry thing, ſave freedom, ſtill a queen.

ELVIDA.

Titles and pomp are hateful to me now,
Since Alfred ſhares them not. While yet his fate
Remains unknown, ſhall my poor widow'd heart
Be bribed to peace with toys like theſe?
Ev'ry enjoyment now has loſt its reliſh;
And life itſelf is grown inſipid to me.

HALDANE.

Lady! diſpel ſuch melancholy thoughts;
They neither ſuit your youth nor beauteous form.
Theſe will enſure you many years of joy,
And purchaſe lovers fond and true as Alfred.

ELVIDA.

That cannot be; Alfred was truth itſelf;
And kinder far than the moſt faithful turtle—
No other lord will e'er Elvida own.
And if reſentleſs fate has cut the thread
In which her peace and pleaſure are entwin'd,
She'll bid adieu to ev'ry chearful thought,
And wait till death, leſs cruel grown,
Unites her to her deareſt lord for ever.

HALDANE.

HALDANE.

Be not, Elvida, to yourſelf a foe;
Nor rob your charms of their expected tribute.
Behold before you one that would ſupply
In your deſerted heart your Alfred's place,
And make you happier than he has done.

ELVIDA.

Join not my Alfred's ſacred name with thine:
Nor dare t' expreſs a thought, altho' his conqueror,
Injurious to my duty, or his fame.
Preſume not, Haldane, to indulge a hope
That abſence can efface his dear idea,
But for a moment, from my faithful heart;
Or that I e'er will liſten to thy ſuit.—
Nor build, vain-glorious Dane, on thy ſucceſs.
The time may come, when he ſhall be reſtor'd,
And thou experience, (your fates revers'd)
In turn, the ſtrange viciſſitudes of war.

HALDANE.

Till that time, quel theſe vain deluſive hopes,
And be adviſ'd—Accept my offer'd heart—
Remember that your perſon's in my pow'r:
And though I now thus lowly condeſcend,
And with unuſual courteſy ſolicit
What I could take by force, I may be urg'd
By your inflexibility, to lay
This complaiſance aſide, and to avail
Me of the right I have acquir'd by conqueſt.

ELVIDA.

Tyrannic as thou art—equally vain
Are thy ſolicitations and thy threats.
My ſtedfaſt heart, I truſt, will never ſwerve
From virtue's paths, whether impel'd or lur'd.

HALDANE.

Since this is your reſolve, know, that unus'd
Either to oppoſition or controul,
I will no longer brook your coy diſdain.
This whining is diſgraceful to a Dane;

Therefore expect henceforth a harsher wooing.
When next we meet, I shall find means to bend
Your stubborn mind obedient to my will,
And gratify my most luxurious wishes.
Till then, farewel! [*Exeunt* HALDANE *and* GOTHRUM.

ELVIDA.

Farewell—and may this be,
Since such are thy intents, a last farewell—
Oh! Alfred! Alfred! how would thy bosom bleed,
Didst thou but know to what licentious hopes
Thy poor Elvida is expos'd—Continue still,
Ye heav'nly guardians, who lately deign'd
To lull my fears to rest, your friendly care!
Hover around, and fortify my mind
Against those ills that threaten to o'erwhelm me!

EMMA.

Under this pressure of affliction's hand,
As thou wert always wont, dear, honour'd lady,
Be calm; and hope the best.

ELVIDA.

I will—I will.
Yielding to wearied nature's call, I'll lay
Me down, and burying in oblivion
Each apprehensive thought, strive to obtain
Thro' thee, oh! gentle sleep! one hour of peace.
[*The Scene closes.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Part of the Daniſh Camp.*

GOTHRUM. *Solus.*

PERDITION ſeize me, but I'll circumvent
Thy baſe deſigns, ungenerous Haldane—
To be a mute ſpectator of thy arts,
To gain the love of one by conqueſt mine,
And ſilently to aid thy purpoſes,
Gives greater torture than thou can'ſt inflict—
Diſſimulation is unpleaſing to me;
But as thou art elate with victory,
And ev'ry Dane, whilſt he broods o'er his plunder,
Looks up and bleſſes thee, I muſt diſſemble—
The ſeaſon being thus unfavourable
For nobly ſatisfying my revenge,
More ſubtle means muſt be purſu'd:
Leſs open ſhall they be, but not leſs ſure.
With new alarms I'll fire the jealous queen,
And keep her agonizing fears awake;
Till, haughty, fierce, and vengeful, as ſhe is,
Her fury will no longer bear controul.
This made ſubſervient to my guidance,
Shall ſtep between my rival and his hopes—
But ſee ſhe comes; and her o'erclouded brow
Proclaims the agitation of her mind.

Enter GUNHILDA.

GUNHILDA.

Well, Gothrum! haſt thou as yet found aught
That will confirm the tale thou lately told'ſt
Of Haldane's weakneſs, and Elvida's triumph?
Or was it a deluſion of thy brain?

GOTHRUM.

Suſpect not, thus, O queen! my truth or zeal:
It joys me not to tell of fancied evils,
Or forge a tale to give my miſtreſs pain—

GUNHILDA.

Impatience and revenge uſurp my mind.
Proceed, and ſpeak, without reſerve, the truth.

GOTHRUM.

More than imagin'd is the love of Haldane.
Laſt night, when ſilence reign'd throughout the camp,
Save where her peaceful empire was diſturb'd
By the hoarſe whiſpers of the changing guards,
Attended only by myſelf, he ſought
The proud pavilion of the captive queen:
There, unabaſh'd, he urg'd his wanton ſuit,
(While ſcorned Gothrum ſtood unnotic'd by)
With all the honey'd words, the ſpecious pleas,
And well-feign'd ardours, of a practic'd lover:

GUNHILDA.

Thou muſt miſtake; this could not be my Haldane;
The fierce, impetuous, and unpoliſh'd Dane.
Far other means he took to win my love.
Warm from the chace, or reeking from the field,
With hair diſhevel'd, and beſmear'd with blood,
He has met me at the entrance of my tent,
And, as a token of his honeſt love,
Brought me a bear's miſhapen rugged hide;
Or elſe, thrown at my feet a rival's head:
Then told me, Haldane knew not how to woo.
Charm'd with his gallant air, and artleſs manners,
There needed not deceitful words to gain
A heart already his. My hand, for which
Unnumber'd princes ſtrove, I freely gave him;
And in return, thought I receiv'd a heart
Unapt to roam—Nor have I found it ſo,
Till this fair ſor'ereſs, by her magic ſpells,
And ſeeming modeſty, allur'd it from me;
For ſuch, however coy ſhe may appear,

I am

I am convinc'd has been the falſe one's art.
But never will Gunhilda ſit and ſigh,
And count the tedious hours, till he returns,
Impell'd by cool ſatiety, not love;
My intervening vengeance ſhall prevent
The dire diſgrace, and marr his promis'd joys.

GOTHRUM.

And a deed ſo juſt let Gothrum ſhare—
This arm ſhall reach the tyrant's ſavage heart,
And put a ſtop to its unfaithful beatings—

GUNHILDA.

What didſt thou ſay?—traitor, reword that thought;
For ſurely my perceptive powers fail'd me—

GOTHRUM.

Elate with zeal to ſerve my royal miſtreſs,
I offer'd to avenge her wrongs, or die
In the attempt—

GUNHILDA.

But how? on whom? on Haldane?
The great, undaunted, and victorious Haldane?
The conqueror of England! thy lord and mine!—
Curs'd be thy tongue—revoke with ſpeed thy words,
And from the tablets of thy mind eraze
The faineſt traces of ſo foul a thought,
Or inſtant death awaits thee.

GOTHRUM.

Forgive, oh, queen! if zealous in your cauſe,
And willing to anticipate your wiſhes,
I have o'erleap'd the bounds of loyalty:
Or, if miſplacing her revenge, I've plann'd
A deed ſubverſive of my ſov'reign's will.

GUNHILDA.

In ſpite of Haldane's temporary roving,
Still does he reign the lord of my deſires:
And could my heart admit, however wrong'd,

A bare ſuggeſtion 'gainſt his valu'd life,
I'd pluck it out to ſhow that I diſclaim'd it—
Another object, Gothrum, will I find
For thy fell purpoſes—The Saxon queen—
Nay ſtart not—either by the bowl or dagger
Remove this canker to Gunhilda's happineſs,
Or—but Haldane comes—thou know'ſt my will,
Nor dare oppoſe it.

Enter HALDANE.

GUNHILDA.

Does Haldane once more deign
T' approach Gunhilda's quarter of the camp?
You've ſcarcely paſs'd the portals of my tent,
Since you return'd victorious from the field.
To what ſhall I impute this ſtrange reſerve?
Or how account for your unwonted coolneſs?

HALDANE.

To thoſe unnumber'd cares that hover round
The laurel'd head. Therefore excuſe, Gunhilda,
This ſeeming diſreſpect.

GUNHILDA.

Can Haldane thus,
Under the maſque of weighty cares, conceal
With well-diſſembled truth, his broken vows?
When firſt you woo'd, Gunhilda little thought,
Free, open, and unpoliſh'd as you ſeem'd,
A lover ſo untaught, would e'er exchange
The ſimple manners of the frozen north
For the fallacious arts of warmer climes.

HALDANE.

What doſt thou mean? Indulge not ſuch vain fears—
Concerns of high import employ my thoughts.
He, on whoſe nod the lives of thouſands hang,
Cannot attend to ceremonious trifles.
Therefore accept this viſit, as 'tis meant,
A proof of my invariable love;
And from thy brow diſpel theſe cauſeleſs frowns.

GUNHILDA.

GUNHILDA.

Had I not heard that gentler thoughts employ
The abſent moments of my faithleſs Lord;
Was I not well aſſur'd that other cares
Than thoſe which hover round the laurel'd head,
Make him a ſtranger to Gunhilda's tent;
This well-gloſs'd tale might ſooth my jealous fears,
And lull to peace my apprehenſive heart.
But when I know that the fair Saxon queen
Employs each thought of this o'er burthen'd mind,
And all theſe labours tend to gain her love,
Can I be calm, or wear a ſmoother brow?

HALDANE

Indulge not theſe tormenting phantaſies,
The progeny of a diſtemper'd brain.

GUNHILDA.

Too real are they; for I have receiv'd
Unqueſtionable proofs of thy diſloyalty:
Such as will cheriſh theſe tormenting thoughts,
Until they ripen into bloody acts.

HALDANE.

Thou certainly, Gunhilda, can'ſt not mean
I attempt the ſacred life of Haldane?
Thou know'ſt too well, how ſtrongly that is guarded
By the Norwegian ſeer's all powerful ſpells,
To hope that any mortal arm can reach it.

GUNHILDA.

Far from Gunhilda's mind be ſuch intents:
Thy life is too eſſential to her own,
Were it not ſhielded thus, to be curtail'd—
Haldane! there may be other means as ſure,
(And if they bloody prove the fault be thine)
To marr the triumph of a hated rival.

HALDANE.

If thou art thus diſpos'd; nor will admit
Of reaſon's aid to quel theſe vain ſuggeſtions;
Let me adviſe thee ere it be too late,

To

To guard againſt their uncontroul'd incitements,
Leſt they reverberated wound thyſelf.

GUNHILDA.

I am unmov'd—thy fierceſt wrath defy,—
Nor ſhall one moon revolve, before thou learn'ſt
[*Exit* HALDANE.
What havock may be made by jealouſy.
(*To* GOTHRUM, *as he goes out*)
I could almoſt forgive thy purpos'd blow—
[*Exit* GOTHRUM.
Once more, ye Demons of revenge, once more
Let me requeſt your aid. Help me to drive
Henceforth each gentle paſſion from my breaſt.
Inſpired by you, e'en if my Haldane ſues,
(Unleſs he ſoon returns) I will not liſten
To the weak dictates of humanity,
Nor ſpare whoever ſhall obſtruct my vengeance.
Ye who appropriate your reſtleſs hours
To the fell ſervice of the jealous wretch,
Attend Gunhilda's call; and till her wrongs
Are, by your counſels, perfectly reveng'd,
Make her perturbed boſom your abode. [*Exit.*

SCENE II. *The Country.*

ALFRED *approaches the door of a Cottage, with logs of wood on his ſhoulder.*

ALFRED. *Solus.*

Tho this rude burden that I bear may ſpeak
The ſervile ſtate; or gall and rend the heart
Of him unus'd to ſuch degrading work;
It leaves no furrows on th' accuſtom'd mind—
How placid is the ſenſeleſs peaſants life!
Unlike the troubled hours of higher ranks!
The wearied hedger at his ſupper ſits,
And riſes from his homely meal refreſh'd.
The hind awakes from his unbroken ſleep,
Nor feels the toil of the preceding day—

Not ſuch the Monarch's lot. The loaded board
Yields no refreſhment to his anxious mind;
And Morpheus' choiceſt poppies loſe their pow'r,
While dangers are awake. His people's weal
Clouds all his days with unremitted care—
Ah! little do the thoughtleſs herd perceive
The thorns which are intwin'd among the gems
That ſparkle on the richeſt diadem;
Or know the burthen of an ermin'd robe—
E'en now does Alfred wear a clowniſh garb;
Yield thus ſubmiſſive to the menial ſtate;
And is content with ſcant unſav'ry diet.—
But for my people's ſake, and thine, Elvida,
'Twere better far to end an uſeleſs life,
And by ſome desp'rate deed court quick relief,
Than longer bear this cowardly confinement—
Peace, peace, diſtracted ſoul! nor murmur thus.
To him, without whoſe cognizance not e'en
A ſparrow falls, commit thy hidden fate—
And, yet alas! frail nature will have way.
Feelings like mine cannot be quite ſuppreſs'd.
Elvida! loſt Elvida!—that much lov'd name
Vibrates the nerve where agonies reſide—
But I muſt go: ſuſpicions may ariſe!

[*Enters the Cottage.*

SCENE III. *Elvida's Pavilion.*

ELVIDA *and* EMMA.

ELVIDA.

How variant are the paces of old time!
To happy mortals, bleſs'd with roſy health,
With freedom, chearfulneſs, and calm content,
A niggard of his ſmiles, he ſeems to fly;
With nimble foot he treads, no dryad ſwifter;
Their fleeting hours he contracts to minutes;
And ere they are aware, is gone for ever!—
To thoſe whom fortune frowns on, how revers'd!

Before the ſick, the poor, or captive wretch,
Solemn and ſlow he moves; and e'en ſtands ſtill;
As if reluctant to beſtow relief.—
How ſad and tedious have my minutes been,
Since he, whoſe preſence only could give time
A pleaſing aſpect or a ſwifter pace,
Has bleſs'd my longing eyes!—Oh, my lov'd lord!—
Doubly depreſſive are my woes to-day;
A ſtrange foreboding of ſome dread event
O'erwhelms my mind, and weighs me down.

EMMA.

Be patient, madam! nor by this dejection
Render yourſelf unable to withſtand
Theſe apprehended evils when they come.

ELVIDA.

I cannot ſhake it off; my attempts are vain—
To you, the ſuff'ring mortal's laſt reſource,
(Yet why the laſt) ye guardian pow'rs,
Permit me to apply for conſolation.

[*Enter* HALDANE *abruptly.*

HALDANE.

Once more Elvida will I deign to aſk
The voluntary off'ring of thy heart.
Nor force me by an obſtinate refuſal,
To have recourſe to my late threaten'd meaſures.

ELVIDA.

Nor urge me, Haldane! to repeat the vows
I lately made, when troubled with thy ſuit.
Elvida ne'er will know another love—
By force, indeed, poſſeſſion thou mayſt gain
Of this poor feeble frame, and unoppos'd
Reap horrid tranſports from a lifeleſs corſe;
But, tyrant as thou art, a captive I,
Thou canſt not taint the pureneſs of my mind.

HALDANE.

Then ſhall I try what harſher means will do.

ELVIDA.

ELVIDA.

Thy tortures I defy: and freely court
The friendly hand of death, which will afford
A ſure relief, if aught thou ſhouldſt attempt
Againſt the ſacred laws of chaſtity.

HALDANE.

Nay then! for all the horrors that enſue
Thank thy own pertinacious conduct—
Bring in the captive Saxon.

[*Enter* ETHELRED *guarded.*

ELVIDA.

Hah! my Father!

HALDANE.

A perſon have I brought, for whom I know
Thou haſt reſpect, to be my mediator—
Thy daughter is perverſe, old man! nor will
Accept the offer'd love of Haldane.
Be thou my friend; thy aged tongue may prove
An abler advocate than mine has been.

ETHELRED,

Inhuman Dane! canſt thou ſuppoſe, that he
Who lately led embatled hoſts againſt thee,
Altho' in chains, will ſtoop to be thy pander?

ELVIDA.

Gallant old man! thoſe words become Saxon.

HALDANE.

On thy ſucceſs do both your lives depend.
Let, therefore, no miſtaken notions
Of ſenſibility, or offended pride,
Tempt thee to hazard my extremeſt fury.

ETHELRED.

Could I conceive that royal Alfred's wife,
The daughter of a Saxon Atheling,
Would ſo forget her elevated ſtate,
As to betray one thought degrading to it,
Thro' any ſpecious reaſons I could urge;

I would diſclaim her as a baſe-born wretch—
But, were it poſſible thus to miſlead her;
Sooner than be thy ſervile ſubſtitute,
I'd pluck my honeſt tongue out by the roots,
And caſt it bleeding from me.

ELVIDA.

Oh! reſt aſſur'd
That neither ſpecious arguments, nor threats,
Shall cauſe thy own Elvida to forget
To whom ſhe is indebted for her being;
Or that ſhe is the wife of god-like Alfred.

HALDANE.

The torture thou haſt pointed out, old man,
Be thy reward—bring forceps glowing hot,
To make it more extreme. Since 'twill diſgrace
Thy honeſt tongue to be an advocate
For Haldane's love, be then for ever dumb.

ELVIDA.

Tyrant! recal theſe rigorous injunctions,
Or, mayſt thou alſo be for ever dumb—
Oh! my dear father! to what dire diſtreſs
Have I reduc'd thee—But it ſhall not be—
My boaſted reſolution all is fled—
Such horrid tortures could I bear to ſee
Inflicted on a poor forlorn old man?
Oh, no!—It muſt not be whilſt I can ſave—
I'd ſooner give this hated body up
(It will not long ſurvive the foul diſgrace)
To the vile purpoſe of the luſtful Dane,
Than that one feature of thy rev'rend face
Be harm'd. Accept, inſatiate conqueror,
The wiſh'd-for purchaſe of that captive's life.

ETHELRED.

Stay, daughter! ſtay—recall thoſe haſty words.
My dreggy life is of too little worth
To be prolong'd on ſuch deteſted terms.
Rather by theſe dread tortures let me ſink
Into the ſilent grave, on whoſe extremity
I long have ſtood; than live to be inform'd
That Alfred's ſpotleſs wife has been diſh

HALDANE

HALDANE.

Conclude at once this unavailing conteſt;
Or I will find ſome expeditious means
To bring it to a favourable end.

ETHELRED.

Mercileſs tyrant! I again defy
Thy expeditious or thy ling'ring deaths.
Spare but my child, and pour on this grey head
The direſt puniſhment thou canſt inflict.

ELVIDA.

Be not incens'd at theſe unmeaning words.
Age has impair'd his reas'ning faculties;
And makes him utter what he does not mean—
To me direct the impulſe of thy wrath:
Here ſatiate thy revenge;—on me! on me!
But ſpare, oh! ſpare that venerable chief!

ETHELRED.

Can this be Alfred's virtuous wife? This her,
Eſteem'd by all, the paragon of her ſex?
More proud of thee than of his royalty,
How has he gloried in Elvida's virtues!
Think then what pangs will rend his faithful heart,
(Should heav'n once more reſtore him to his throne)
To find his wife unworthy of his love.

ELVIDA.

The repetition of that much-lov'd name,
Has to my mind reſtor'd its wonted dread
Of infamy; and makes me wiſh to live
Pure and unſullied for my abſent lord—
But can I bare to ſee my father bleed?

ETHELRED.

Does it admit a doubt?

HALDANE.

No longer ſhall it—

Theſe

These irons heat much slower than my wrath;
Take, therefore, vain old man, this speedier death.

[HALDANE *draws his ponyard, and as he is about to plunge it into* ETHELRED's *bosom,* ELVIDA *snatches it from his hand, and turns the point of it towards her own breast.*

ELVIDA, *looking upwards.*

Though thou hast issu'd thy severe decrees,
Almighty sovereign! against self-murder,
Such o'ercharg'd woes as mine will plead excuse,
And purchase for me thy reluctant pardon!

Attendant SPIRIT *sings at a distance.*

Hold, hold thy hand! thy Alfred cries,
From distant fens, where hid he lies.
Tho' now like thee absorb'd in grief,
He bids the live, and hope relief.

ELVIDA, *dropping the Ponyard.*

Hold, sacrilegious hand! nor dare attempt
A life that Alfred's favour renders sacred—
Forgive, offended pow'rs! the desp'rate thought!

ETHELRED.

What unseen friend thus checks thy impious arm,
And in such heav'nly strains conveys thee comfort?

HALDANE.

Tho' this can only be delusion,
Or the device of some unfriendly sorcerer,
It fills my mind with awe—I must retire. [*Aside.*
Think not t' escape my rage by this contrivance;
I soon shall find some more auspicious season—
Lead back this captive to his murky cell;
There let him lingring lie— [ETHELRED *led off.*
And as for thee, [*To* ELVIDA.
Perverse o'er-virtuous dame, may ev'ry god
That Haldane venerates, become his foe,
If he does not subdue thy waiward heart. [*Exit.*

ELVIDA.

ELVIDA.

Shall I hereafter doubt your kind protection,
Ye miniſters of grace, who guardant wait,
Inviſibly, around the humble ſuppliant?
E'en in this trying hour, as I requeſted,
Ye have proportion'd to the dreadful conflict
My feeble pow'rs, and kept me from deſpair!—
Yes, Alfred! I will hope—Nor ſhall Elvida,
(At leaſt while ſhe her actions can command)
Sully her yet unſpoted character
By a diſgraceful deed; ſuch as would tend,
Should heav'n once more reſtore her to thy arms,
To embitter thy ſucceſs. [*The Scene cloſes.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The Foreſt of Selwood.*

EDWYN, *attended by ſeveral Saxon Noblemen, and Troops.*

EDWYN.

OUR numbers haply being thus increas'd,
We now may ſurely cope with theſe invaders;
And, nervated by loyalty and love,
Revenge the death of our much-honour'd king.
At leaſt we may attempt the duteous deed;
And if it fails, the worſt that can enſue,
Will be a glorious death, and laſting fame.

FIRST LORD.

Who would not die in ſuch a noble cauſe?

SECOND

SECOND LORD.

We all are ready to attend Lord Edwyn;
And ſhed our blood to ſhow our loyalty.

TROOPS.

All! All!

EDWYN.

Who would not die, indeed, for ſuch a king?—
From godlike Alfred might ſucceeding princes
Learn to be great and good: learn to acquire
What only can repay a ſov'reign's cares,
His ſubject's love. Nay, not his ſubjects only,
But the reſpectful love of all mankind.
In him we ſaw combin'd, ſo rarely ſeen,
The ſceptred monarch, and the PATRIOT KING.

FIRST LORD.

Speak on, young lord; with pleaſure do we hear
The praiſes of our ever-valu'd maſter.

EDWYN.

What age has e'er produc'd a greater warriour?
Achilles' direful ſtrength, Ulyſſes' prudence,
The valour of the Macedonian hero,
And all the firmneſs of the firſt great Cæſar,
Were each concenter'd in this wond'rous man.

SECOND LORD.

Let us away to prove they are diffus'd
In ſome degree, among his faithful troops.

EDWYN.

Alert, compos'd, and vigilant in war,
Well ſkill'd in every art to annoy a foe,
Till lately overpow'r'd, ſucceſs was his—
When theſe invaders call'd him to the field,
Swift as the Falcon's flight his motions were—
And when the battle rag'd; where danger was;
Where death, with jaws extended took his way;
There, there ſtood Alfred! checking his bloody ſtrides.—
In peace as gentle as the fleecy lamb,

His

His meekneſs we admir'd; wond'ring to ſee
A mortal reach ſuch wide extremes:
His mighty ſpirit, then, ſtilly ſupply'd
In leſs impetuous ſtreams, each thought, each act,
And nouriſhed, in turn, the milder virtues.

FIRST LORD.

Edwyn! the recollection melts our ſouls.

EDWYN.

His being's end and aim appears to'ave been
The furth'rance of his people's happineſs.
Even to points minute would he attend;
And liſten with a kind and gracious ear
To their complaints. Theſe would he remedy
If with reaſon urg'd; if not, diſmiſs;
And with reluctant tongue mildly reprove.
Nor did he frown to ſee his ſubjects free;
And as *free* men, tenacious of their rights.

SECOND LORD.

We all can witneſs to this heart-felt truth.

EDWYN.

Tho' thus the friend and father of us all;
Tho' to the meaneſt affable and kind;
Yet no degrading intercourſe enſu'd:
The higheſt ranks look'd up, and unſought paid,
As to a deity, their adorations.

FIRST LORD.

Since firſt the Saxon heptarchy was founded,
There has not reign'd ſo wiſe, ſo good, a prince.

EDWYN.

Before our iſle, of late, became a prey
To this freſh hoſt of northern ſavages;
Thro' Alfred's well-digeſted laws, enforc'd
With an impartial but a rig'rous hand,
The bracelet hung (for proof expos'd) untouch'd—
The miſplaced purſe lay in the public road
For days unop'd, till by its owner claim'd—
The tim'rous virgin unmoleſted walk'd

At eventide, thro' the lone avenue,
Nor fear'd the ruffian's violating graſp.

SECOND LORD.

Calm and ſerene then flow'd the paſſing hours!

EDWYN.

Manly, yet tender, was the love he bore
The worthy partner of his throne, Elvida—
But why do I repeat to you, who know
So well his worth, whoſe grateful hearts
Anticipate the juſt encomium,
The noble actions of this godlike man.
My tongue, well pleas'd could dwell upon his praiſe,
Till the declining ſun withdraws his beams;
Then with the moon purſue the unfiniſh'd tale—
He was a king indeed! a fit vicegerent
For him whoſe bounteous hand in ſhow'rs inceſſant
Strews unearnt bleſſings thro' the univerſe!

FIRST LORD.

And yet, alas! he ſhares the common lot—
Blind leveller! could nothing ſtay thy ſcythe?
Could not deſert like his, deſert moſt rare,
Bribe thee to hold thy unrelenting hand?

EDWYN.

Who is it thus breaks in on our retirement?
My ſight deceives me, or it is Earl Odun—

Enter ODUN.

'Tis he—Welcome redoubted chief—We were
Afraid that thou hadſt preſs'd the ſanguine plain;
And, favour'd more than thoſe whom death has ſpar'd,
Lain by the ſide of our beloved lord;
Whoſe loſs we have unceaſingly bewail'd.

ODUN.

No!—I am yet alive,—and live to tell,
That Alfred lives—

EDWYN.

Thanks! Thanks to heav'n!

TROOPS.

TROOPS.

Thanks! Thanks to heav'n, for theſe enliv'ning tidings.

EDWYN.

Now art thou doubly welcome to my arms—
Does Alfred live? does our lov'd maſter live?
My heart o'erjoy'd, wiſhes thee to repeat
Th' harmonious ſound.

ODUN.

He does, indeed, my friends.
But forc'd by frowning fortune, has retir'd
To a retreat known only to myſelf,
Thither, as from the wounds I had receiv'd
I could not then accompany his flight,
In this diſguiſe I haſted, till bewilder'd
Amidſt the mazes of this leafy labyrinth,
I loſt my way; or rather let me ſay,
Was led inviſibly by ſome kind hand
To meet with joy my loyal countrymen.

EDWYN.

We alſo to theſe deep-embower'd ſhades,
(For who could ſtand 'gainſt ſuch a hoſt of foes)
Retir'd t'await the turn of fortune's tide—
Here many of our ſcatter'd friends have join'd us.
Till being now a formidable band,
We had determin'd to revenge the death,
(We thought him dead) of our beloved lord,
Or die in the attempt—But as thou art
So opportunely come, changing this plan
For a more pleaſing one, we will with thee
Seek out our obſcur'd ſun, and clear away
The darkſome clouds in which he is envelop'd;
That he may once more ſhine, and with his rays
Invigorate his poor benighted kingdom..

ODUN.

Tho' I admire thy gallant ſpirit, Edwyn,
Let me forbid this deſp'rate reſolution.
Surrounded as we are by num'rous foes,
We muſt proceed with care, leſt we defeat,

By our temerity, our beſt laid plans:
Reſtrain, my valiant friends, a little while
That ardour which I wiſh not to ſuppreſs;
When to your ſafe retreat I will conduct
Our exil'd monarch, who ſhall lead you on,
The ſureſt road to conqueſt and renown.

EDWYN.

How do I long for the important hour
That ſhall reſtore my maſter to his throne,
And Emma to my arms! —forgive me Sir!—
Your beauteous daughter likewiſe claims a ſhare
In my regards. I long have lov'd her;
And had not theſe commotions interven'd,
Should have requeſted your conſent to tender
A not ignoble hand to that fair maid.

ODUN.

Be this a ſecondary thought, young man!
The welfare of your country be the firſt.
Should Emma owe her liberty to thee,
Fear not but that her Father will reward
Her gallant reſcuer with his approbation.

EDWYN.

Did Edwyn's reſolution want excitement,
Thoſe valued names, both dearer far than life,
Would call forth all his pow'rs; and ſtimulate
His panting heart to brave unheard-of dangers.

ODUN.

I doubt thee not—But now I muſt renew
My interrupted ſearch—What time the ſun
Has thrice thus low revolv'd; about the hour
The ſolemn bird of night, with tardy wing,
Skims o'er the fields to ſeek his vermin prey;
And the blind beetle, with his diſmal hum,
Croſſes the path of the belated traveller;
Expect my ſure return. And with me comes,
If he yet lives, as I will truſt he does,
Alfred, the pole-ſtar of our hopes and wiſhes.
Till then ſecreted lie—Till then, my friends,
As my impatient mind diſdains all reſt,
Adieu.

EDWIN.

EDWYN.

Adieu, my Lord! ſucceſs attend your errand.
A choſen band ſhall help you to retrace
Your erring ſteps, and ſet you on your way.

LORDS

Adieu, adieu! [*Exit* ODUN.

EDWYN.

When we have ſent ſome truſty ſpies abroad,
To make with caution ſuch diſcoveries
As may be uſeful at our Lord's return;
We will employ the heavy lagging hours
In giving ſurer feathers to our darts,
And keener edges to our crooked falchions.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A Plain on the Coaſt of Norway, cover'd with ſnow.*

At a diſtance are ſeen Mountain's of Ice.

Enter MAGICIAN.

The ſpells I lately wrought ſo firm and ſure
Round the great Haldane, and his fav'rite chiefs,
Are to their limitation nearly run;
For finite only is their pow'r. Therefore
I muſt again reword them; and renew
Their ſalutiferous influence;
Leſt dangers, unawares, aſſail my friends—
The ſpirits I command, without whoſe aid
My beſt-wrought charms were ineffectual,
Muſt be by force conſtrain'd to do their duty;
And need a rigid hand to keep them true:
Dreading this cold inhoſpitable clime,
Which e'en affects their ſhadowy forms,
Reluctant they obey my needful mandates,
And murmur as they flutter thro the air.

AIR.

AIR.

I.

Demons, and Goblin's! haſte ye all,
To obey your maſter's pow'rful call.
Come, come away, make no delay,
Leſt on the ſtuborn elf my vengeance fall.

II.

In ſhow'rs of hail, or flakey ſnow,
Deſcend, Malgrada's will to know.
Come, come away, make no delay,
And perch on yonder icy mountain's brow.

III.

The taſk enjoin'd ſhall not be hard—
Renew my ſpells, great Haldane guard.
Come, come away, make no delay,
A ſunſhine holiday be your reward.

[*A ſtorm of hail, with thunder.*

Enter Attendant SPIRIT.

Attendant SPIRIT. *Aſide.*

Fooliſh Magician! thou ſhalt ſee
How vain thy incantations be.
As thou repeat'ſt, I will unſay,
And drive thy ſhadowy ſprites away.
Haldane, nor any of his hoſt,
Shall over worthier mortals boaſt
A pow'r deriv'd from magic charms,
To guard againſt all caſual harms.
To Alfred, Haldane's fate ſhall yield:
Virtue alone can ſafely ſhield.

AIR.

I.

Be gone, vain ſorcerer, and know
The good alone can here below
Deſerve the care, or favour ſhare,
Of thoſe who real bleſſings do beſtow.

Thy

II.

Thy air-blown ſpells but for awhile
Thy fancied favourites beguile.
When moſt they need, with deadly ſpeed,
The bubbles break; the fates no longer ſmile!

MAGICIAN.

Some being much more pow'rful than myſelf
My pow'r diſarms. In vain do I repeat
The magic words that us'd to operate.
My ſpirits all are fled—I too muſt fly;
And leave thee, wretched Haldane! to thy fate. [*Exit.*

Attendant SPIRIT.

Scatter'd be thus fair virtue's foes!
Such checks her vot'ry never knows.
Timid is the mind engag'd on vicious deeds;
Too ſure appalment or remorſe ſucceeds. [*Exit.*

SCENE III. *The Country.*

ALFRED *ſitting at the door of a Cottage, ſhaping a bow, and with arrows ſcattered around him.*

ALFRED. *Solus.*

How uncontrolable are ſtrong propenſities,
Whether receiv'd from nature or from cuſtom!
With the diſguiſe I wear, the neat-herd's ſtaff,
And leathern ſcrip, would better far agree,
Than theſe rude implements of war; and yet,
Such is the pow'r of mighty habitude,
Or ſo accordant are they to my wiſhes,
That only whilſt I bend the ſtubborn bow,
And ſhape the winged arrow, do I feel
The leaſt alleviation of my woes—
What ſtranger thus approaches my retreat?
His noble air ſpeaks him above the rank
Of the unpoliſh'd villagers, who dwell
Among theſe fens and unfrequented wilds.
It ſure is Devon's lord, my brave companion,
That, now recover'd, ſeeks me out—'tis he—

Enter ODUN.

Welcome, thrice welcome, Odun, to my arms.

ODUN.

ODUN.

I joy to ſee my ever-honour'd lord,
Safe from the fury of his watchful foes,
And thus employ'd; which plainly indicates
Due temp'rature of body and of mind.

ALFRED.

The one is much more healthful than the other,
All is not well within, my friend!— my mind,
Depreſs'd by this diſgraceful privacy,
Flies to each ſhadowy comfort for relief
From the corroding thoughts that prey upon it.

ODUN.

Drive this deſpair away, my lord. Not long
Shall ſuch inactive paſtimes give relief
To the dejected mind of England's ſov'reign.
I come to point out nobler recreations.

ALFRED.

Flatter not thus a crownleſs, vanquiſh'd monarch.

ODUN.

The hopes I give are not fallacious.
You have already waſted too much time
In this obſcurity. A faithful band
Of loyal Saxons, all reſolute and true,
Expect, amidſt the knotted oaks of Selwood,
Impatiently, the coming of their king,
To lead them on to victory or death.

ALFRED.

Can there be ſo much happineſs in ſtore
For ſuch a fallen wretch as Alfred?—
Yet wherefore do I thus pile ſin on ſin,
And add theſe impious doubts to baſe dejection!—
I will not diſbelieve thy ſtory, Odun;
Tho' for a moment my deſponding mind
Thought it too flattering to be unfeign'd.

ODUN.

Doubt not the truth of aught that I ſhall tell.
The principal incampment of the Danes
Lies but a few ſhort paces from the wood
Within whoſe ample bounds your troops are hid—

ALFRED.

Break off thy pleaſing tale, and for a while
Retire with me into this homely cot,
Where undiſcover'd I ſo long have dwelt.
And having there refreſh'd thy wearied limbs,
(My nerves more firmly brac'd, my mind alert,
From the enliv'ning tidings thou haſt brought,
Need no nutritious aid) we will away;
And as we travel on, thou ſhalt recount
Each circumſtance that has befallen thee,
Since laſt we parted. [*They enter the cottage.*

SCENE IV. *The Daniſh Camp.*

Enter HALDANE *and* GOTHRUM.

HALDANE.

'Tis thou, falſe Gothrum, that has thus betray'd
My deviations to the jealous queen;
She could not elſe, with ſo minute an eye,
Have trac'd my ſecret paſſion for Elvida.

GOTHRUM.

Surrounded as thou art by thoſe who owe
Their elevation to Gunhilda's favour,
And therefore make her intereſt their own,
Thou canſt not be ſurpriz'd that all thy motions,
Nearly as ſoon as form'd, ſhould reach her ear.

HALDANE.

It might be ſo; for if unprincipled;
If gratitude or honour bound the not;
The dread of my diſpleaſure ſurely would
Secure thy ſilence and fidelity.

GOTHRUM.

Haldane! doubt not my zeal; but place it rather
To friendſhip, or to duty, than to fear.

HALDANE.

Either of theſe be my ſecurity!—
To day be ev'ry thought alone employ'd
On our approaching feſtival; ordain'd
By Denmark's laws to be obſerv'd
With ſolemn rights and ſplendid pageantries.
See that we fall not ſhort, in any point,
Of that magnificence which hitherto,
As oft as it revolv'd, has grac'd the day.

GOTHRUM.

Fear not my care or punctuality.

HALDANE.

The Saxons, being quite ſubdu'd, can give
No interruption to the general joy.
Nor will, my friend, victorious Haldane fear
Any intruſion from the Saxon King,
If heated with the elevating juice,
He alſo crowns the feſtive night with love—
Iſſue, with ſpeed, the orders I have giv'n,
And meet me in my tent.

GOTHRUM.

I will, my lord—
[*Exit Haldane.*
Yes, Haldane! I will ſurely meet thee there;
Nor ever leave thy ſide, perfidious prince!
Till thy full crop of promis'd joys are ripe.
Then as thou ſmil'ſt o'er thy expected harveſt,
My baneful hand ſhall either blaſt or reap it.
I'll plunge my poniard to thy vaunting heart,
And in thy place enjoy the Saxon queen,
Secure from any rival's interruption. [*Exit.*

SCENE

SCENE V. *The Foreſt of Selwood.*

Enter EDWYN, LORDS, *and* TROOPS.

EDWYN.

The lagging hours have crept and crept along,
Till they have gain'd the point when Odun ſaid
We ſhould once more behold our long-loſt lord—
The ſetting ſun, juſt ſunk into the main,
Dyes with his golden beams the varying clouds;
And gives to contemplation's ſober eye,
If not ſo gariſh, a more pleaſing day—
The bat begins to take his ev'ning flight
Thro' the lone glade, or the ſad cloiſter's arch—
And yet he comes not.

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

While near the extreme
Of this wide-ſpreading grove I kept my watch,
I ſaw two travellers in mean attire,
Whoſe ſtately port belye their ſordid dreſs,
Come o'er the brow of that high hill, which ſtands
Due weſt from our retreat; and bend, with ſpeed,
Their well-directed ſteps towards this wood.
Soon as mine eye could trace their deſtination,
As duty bid, I haſt'ned to inform you. [*Exit.*

EDWYN.

By all our hopes, the two that we expect—
Let us away, my Lords, to give our king
The earlieſt proof of our reſpectful love—
But ſee, he comes!—his ardour has outſtripp'd
Our loyalty—welcome, moſt gracious ſovereign!

Enter ALFRED *and* ODUN.

Welcome again to theſe expectant eyes,
Which overflow with joy.

ALFRED.

Thanks, worthy Edwyn!—
With pleaſure I receive theſe proofs of love.

Firſt LORD.

Pardon our waiward tongues, that will not utter
A tithe of what our bounding hearts would dictate.

ALFRED.

I thank ye all!—by this am I repaid
For ev'ry anxious or diſgraceful hour—
As precious time is doubly precious now,
For great events hang on the paſſant minutes;
Suppoſing each has ſaid what his full heart
Would prompt, (nor ſhall I under-rate your love)
I will diſpenſe with further compliments,
And talk of matters more important to us.

ODUN.

Edwyn, recount to our long abſent lord
The tidings you have gain'd, ſince late I left
Your intricate abode. The reſt he knows.

EDWYN.

With pleaſure have I learn'd from thoſe I ſent
T'explore the ſtate of our moſt ſavage foes,
(The term moſt ſavage will you écho back
Before I have concluded my ſad tale)
That their chief corps is certainly incamp'd
Not many furlongs diſtant from this wood,
Near to its eaſtern border. I've further heard,
That with to-morrows ſun, they celebrate
The anniverſary of ſome heathen rites.

ALFRED.

This part I joy to hear, altho' thy tale
Abounds with incidents that will imbitter it—
Proceed—

EDWYN.

The moon would ſet and riſe again,
Before I could relate each ſhocking ſtory,
Repeated to me, at our ſpies' return,
Of Daniſh cruelty. The richeſt plains
Of this once fertile Iſle are by their ravages
Become a wilderneſs, barren and deſart.

The terrify'd inhabitants behold
The dread approach of their rapacious foes,
With the ſame horror they would view a ſwarm
Of greedy locuſts, blackening the air,
Deſcend in ſummer on their fruitful fields.

ALFRED.

Unhappy country!—But thy Alfred's hand
Ere long ſhall bruſh theſe hated inſects off.

EDWYN.

Neither the hermit's cell, the ſhrines of ſaints,
The ſacred dwellings of the cloiſter'd monks,
Nor any of thoſe venerable piles
Rear'd by our great forefathers, and by them
Devoted to the ſervice of our GOD,
Could long eſcape their ſacrilegious hands:
But all in aſhes or in ruins lie.

ALFRED.

Accurſed infidels! Where, where was Alfred?

EDWYN.

Nor could the harmleſs prieſts, altho' array'd
In their moſt ſacred veſtments, and before
Their altars proſtrate, extract one grain
Of pity from their unrelenting hearts.

ALFRED.

With tenfold rigour ſhall my arm revenge
This wanton cruelty. And with copious ſtreams
Will I repay this waſte of holy blood.

EDWYN.

But let me not forget, ye chaſter far
Than her whom fabling poets term *chaſte Dian*,
Your tragic ſtory!
Succeeding ages ſhall receive your fame
Pure and unſpotted as ye were yourſelves—

ALFRED.

What haſt thou yet to tell, my Edwyn?—
Thou haſt already open'd every vein
That leads to my heart's core; where weeping ſits
Compaſſion.

EDWYN.

EDWYN.

As theſe rude ſavages approach'd
The monaſt'ry of Coldingham, which lies
Near Mercia's borders; the virtuous abbeſs,
On whoſe ſmooth brow no wrinkles yet appear'd,
Calling her veiled daughters all around her,
Acquainted them, while the pelucid drops
In quick ſucceſſion trickled down her cheeks,
With all they had to fear from Daniſh luſt.
Then, with augmented ſorrow, that almoſt
Depriv'd her of the pow'r of utterance,
Told them their foes were at the gate. Amaz'd
And terrify'd, they gather cloſer round
Their weeping governeſs, and by their looks
Implore her aid. "Children moſt dear," ſhe cry'd,
"This only can preſerve inviolate
"Your ſpotleſs forms; by this alone can you
"Fulfil the vow of chaſtity you've made"—
She ſaid no more, but with a ſharpen'd knife
Lopp'd off the beauties of her lovely face—

ALFRED.

Oh! horrible!—

EDWYN.

The Nuns aſtoniſh'd ſtood,
Irreſolute and timid; till at length,
The ſatyrs at the door, each follow'd quick
The great example of their virtuous miſtreſs—
Enrag'd to find their brutal purpoſes
Thus croſs'd, and ſhudd'ring at the ſight, the Danes
Soon ſet the conſecrated pile on fire;
And in the flames conſum'd all but the fame
Of the chaſte abbeſs and her peerleſs Nuns,
Which like a Phœnix roſe to live for ever.

ALFRED.

Savage indeed!—

EDWYN,

EDWYN.

Shall we a moment waſte
In execrations, or in uſeleſs wonder?
Let us away, and e're to-morrow's dawn,
Appeaſe the ſhades of theſe dear ſlaughter'd ſaints
With ſanguine torrents drawn from Daniſh hearts.

Firſt LORD.

Lead, lead us on, my lord.

TROOPS.

Away! away!

ALFRED.

Reſtrain awhile this commendable fury,
Till we can learn, with more preciſion,
The ſituation of our foes: till we
Can know, from evidence undoubted,
Their ſtrength, their numbers, and their diſcipline;
And by ſome penetrating eye diſcover
The weakeſt parts of their intrenchments.

EDWYN.

That taſk be mine! Permit me, gracious ſov'reign,
To ſhow by an exploit ſo hazardous,
The love I bear to thee and to my country.

ALFRED.

I thank thee for thy zeal; but Edwyn know,
A taſk like this, on which depends the fate
Of Alfred and his people, will require
The cooleſt temper, and matureſt judgment.
Thy gallant ſpirit, Edwyn, might betray
Thy purpos'd end, and marr the undertaking—
Be it my bus'neſs, therefore, to explore
Thoſe unknown regions; and to bring you back
A chart to guide us to the wiſh'd-for ſpot.

ODUN.

What unexampled fortitude!—How few

Among

Among thoſe few a diadem becomes,
Would thus, unforc'd, enter the den of death?

EDWYN.

Happy the people bleſs'd with ſuch a king!

ALFRED.

Wonder no longer at a reſolution
That owes its merit to its ſingularity.
Monarchs are but the miniſters of good
To their deſerving ſubjects.

TROOPS.

Thou godlike prince!

ALFRED.

While yet night ſits upon her ebon throne,
In ſilent ſolemn ſtate; nor fears th' approach
Of her coeval enemy the ſun;
Odun and I together will ſeek out
The Daniſh camp: and when the ſmiling morn
Trips o'er the eaſtern hills, in ſome diſguiſe
Procure admittance. Then, if our return
Meets no delay, before this hour to-morrow,
Will we remeaſure back the ground we've trod,
And lead you by the ſureſt road to conqueſt—
But, as my aged friend needs ſome repoſe,
We will retire into your leafy tent,
And there, in haſte, partake of ſuch refreſhments
As your ſecluded ſtate affords.

[*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I. *The Tent of the Daniſh King.*

HALDANE, *ſurrounded by his Nobles, at a grand Entertainment.*

HALDANE.

IN tranquil envied ſtate, thus do I ſit,
Th' acknowledg'd conqueror of England!
While Alfred, once the idol of this land,
In dank retreats hides his diminiſh'd head,
Unſhelter'd and unhous'd: and all his glory
Serves only to augment the fame of Haldane.

PRINCIPAL DANISH LORD.

Renown'd and mighty prince! theſe northern climes
Cannot thy equal boaſt. Not even he,
Our country's warriour-god, great WOODEN,
Shall rival Haldane's name in future ſtory.

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Moſt gracious ſov'reign! with the earlieſt dawn
Two Britiſh minſtrels did approach our ramparts.
Charm'd with their minſtrelſy, the outer guards
Gave them admittance: and their rapt'rous praiſe
Reaching the neareſt tents, each ſoldier wiſh'd
To ſhare with them the muſical repaſt.
Long have they entertain'd the camp; nor would
Their ſweet harps grate upon a monarch's ear.
I've therefore brought them to the royal tent.
Perchance, amidſt this general merriment,
Their notes may not diſpleaſe.

HALDANE.

Let them come in—
Their notes will not diſpleaſe—Whence come ye minſtrels?

Enter ALFRED *and* ODUN, *diſguiſed as Harpers.*

ALFRED.

From Cambria's lonely vales, thro' which the Dee
Rolls his meand'ring ſtream; where Mona's hills
Rear to the higheſt heav'ns their ſnow-tipp'd heads.

HALDANE.

Ye opportunely come; for Haldane feaſts
To day, in honour of his gods; and would
Relax his mind from the fatigues of war—
Retire into the veſtibule, and there
Sing to your harps ſome animating lay.

ALFRED *and* ODUN *ſing behind the Scenes, accompanied by the Harp.*

Recitative, for two Voices.

'Tis thine, melodious Harp, to raiſe, or bind,
The various paſſions of the human mind.
As o'er thy ſtrings the ſkilful fingers fly,
And wake ſeraphic ſtrains of harmony,
The heart with pleaſure bounds, or ſinks in woe,
And tears of joy or grief ſpontaneous flow!
On thee heroic deeds are loudly rung;
To ſweeter notes the ſongs of peace are ſung.

AIR.

Each latent paſſion, by thy aid,
Is to the face of day betray'd.
Fair virtue ſtill more fair appears;
And vice a frightful aſpect wears;
The tyrant's palid cheek proclaims
That dark and lawleſs are his aims;
That murder, rapine, luſt and fraud—

HALDANE.

Break off your ſtrains—hence fooliſh dotards, hence!
Leſt I ſhould hurl my jav'lin at your heads,
Unmindful of your privileg'd profeſſion—
Go preach your muſty rules to ſilly chriſtians;
Who live on airy hopes of promis'd joys—
The preſent hour be mine. I will not truſt

Th' uncertain pleaſures of futurity.
Let Alfred walk by virtue's rigid rules;
Haldane diſdains to own her irkſome ſway.
Go, ſearch him out, and ſee her beſt rewards—
Bring other minſtrels of a ſprightlier turn.

[*The Scene cloſes.*

SCENE II. *Part of the Daniſh Camp.*

Enter ALFRED *and* ODUN.

ALFRED.

So near my captiv'd love, my dearer ſelf,
Can I go hence without one thrilling look,
One word, to keep my full-fraught heart from burſting?

ODUN.

Support yourſelf thro' this moſt arduous taſk,
Nor let your wonted temperance deſert you.

ALFRED.

Oh Devon! Devon! little doſt thou know
What pangs I feel, what tortures I endure,
While I walk over this unhallow'd ground—
And could I ſing? could I ſo far ſuppreſs
The agonizing tranſports of my mind?—
I once was on the point of throwing by
My ill-tun'd harp (whoſe every ſtring
Seem'd to my vexed ſoul full of harſh diſcords)
And with an inſtrument much better ſuited
To this right hand, have rais'd emotions,
Far more accordant to his ſavage heart.

ODUN.

How fortunate that you could overcome
The dictates of your fury! elſe certain death
Had been our lot, and vain our enterprize.

ALFRED.

That we may ſtill without ſuſpicion rove;
A little longer ſtrive we to amuſe

(However grating to our minds) theſe infidels.
Till having found the tent that holds my love,
Cloſe to its plaited borders will I ſing
One cheering air, to keep her hopes alive,
And then retire; ſoon to return again,
In characters more ſuited to our wiſhes, [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *Elvida's Pavilion.*

ELVIDA *and* EMMA.

Alfred's Harp without.

ELVIDA.

What pleaſing melody is this I hear?
It gently cheers my wearied drooping mind,
Like the refreſhing breezes of the ſpring.

EMMA.

'Tis only ſome ſweet minſtrel paſſing by.

ELVIDA.

Sweet, ſweet, indeed!

ALFRED, *ſings without, to his harp.*

Stern winter gone, ſoft ſpring ſucceeds—

ELVIDA.

Sure 'tis my Alfred's well known voice—

ALFRED *continues to ſing.*

Stern winter gone, ſoft ſpring ſucceeds:
The ſun may be obſcur'd awhile:
As varying nature thus proceeds,
By turns does fortune frown and ſmile.
Let not deſpair thy hopes deſtroy,
But live, and fortune's ſmiles enjoy.

ELVIDA, *in great agitation.*

'Tis he!—
Stay, ſtay, my love!—One word, one look—
Wilt thou, unkind one, leave thy own Elvida,
Nor take her with thee? Oh, cruel Alfred!—

At

At leaſt repeat thy hope-inſpiring ſong—
He's gone, nor heeds my pray'r ; and I am doom'd
To bear as yet my load of miſeries.

EMMA.

Be patient, madam!

ELVIDA.

I will my Emma—
For ſhould it be my long-loſt lord himſelf,
And not the ſportive fantome of a mind
Solely engroſs'd by his ador'd idea ;
Doubtleſs, to forward ſome important plan,
He viſits in diſguiſe the Daniſh camp.
If ſo, my perturbations may alarm,
And counteract his great deſigns. Shall then
Elvida blaſt her Alfred's daring ſchemes!
Forbid it heav'n!—I'll ſtill my throbbing heart,
And with compoſure wait for their completion.

The Scene cloſes.

SCENE IV. *Gunhilda's Tent.*

Enter GUNHILDA *and* WITCH.

GUNHILDA.

Thy fame for deadly deeds has reach'd mine ear ;
I've therefore ſent for thee, all powerful Hag,
T' avenge me of an enemy—Cull me
From among thy life deſtroying tortures
One of the ſpeedieſt and moſt exquiſite,
That with unerring aim ſhall reach the heart,
And lib'rally will I reward thee for it.

WITCH.

Extenſive is indeed my pow'r, oh! queen!
To me, and to my wrinkled wayward ſiſters,
Is giv'n by Lucifer, great prince of th' air,
The means to torture and perplex mankind.
For ſuch as are not ſhielded by their virtues,

Cramps,

Cramps, aches, pains, and vertigos we have;
The troubled fancy, or the dank night-mare—
For thoſe he gives to our ſeverer vengeance,
We greater torments frame; diſtorted limbs,
Convulſive ſtruggles, and forlorn deſpair—
Or, to compleat our ſovereign's deadlieſt will,
We form an image of the bleachen wax;
Which, as we celebrate our nightly orgies,
By a ſelf-kindled fire we ſlowly roaſt,
And, as it melts, the pining victim dies.

GUNHILDA,

The laſt, if but as ſpeedy as my wiſhes,
Be then the chaſtiſement of her I hate.

WITCH.

For this whole nights we watch, and never taſte,
Like happier mortals, of refreſhing ſleep.

GUNHILDA.

I ſhould have thought, for ſuch inceſſant toils,
Thy powerful maſter would beſtow upon thee
Other rewards than tatter'd weeds, rank penury,
And all the frail infirmities of age.

WITCH.

With golden promiſes he firſt allures;
Our words once giv'n, and ſolemn rites perform'd,
He then derides—
[*She ſhrieks as if pinched by ſome inviſible Being.*
But I muſt not reveal
The ſecrets of our hell-compacted band—
Tell me the perſon that you'd have deſtroy'd,
And if within the reach of baneful charms,
Already number'd are their ſhorten'd days.

GUNHILDA.

The captive Saxon queen, by magic ſpells
Has robb'd me of my Haldane's valu'd love.
Securely guarded by her paramour
From the moſt crafty efforts of my rage,
I would by ſtronger charms unbind her ſpells,

And while I circumvent, I'd alſo puniſh—
For this I ſent to beg thy friendly aid.

WITCH.

Thou ſcarcely could'ſt have nam'd another mortal
Within the ſpacious limits of this camp,
My ſupernat'ral pow'rs would not have reach'd.
But ſhe is hedg'd about by ſpirits pure,
Who keep, well-pleas'd, inceſſant watch around
Her lovely perſon, and more perfect mind—
Forgive me, lady, if while we diſcourſe
Of the fair captive queen, compell'd, I give
Her praiſes due: reluctantly I ſpeak
What truth's ſtern miniſters command.

GUNHILDA.

Go on!—Accompliſh but my fav'rite wiſh,
Do but attone for theſe ungrateful ſounds
By deeds more grateful, and I will forgive thee.

WITCH.

Not long ago, as thro' the pitchy air
I flew acroſs the camp, to celebrate,
On a bleak barren plain, our weekly ſabbath,
A pure celeſtial brightneſs caught mine eye;
Such as beſtreaks the chambers of the north
When hoary winter makes his chill approach;
Or, from aſſembled glow-worms ſtilly ſhines,
Studding with gems the ſable robe of night.
Surpriz'd, I darted from my tow'ring height,
And drew as near as prudence would allow;
When I beheld an incorporeal hoſt
Keeping their watch around a ſtately tent,
Inviſible to mortal eye; who while
They wakeful ſat, chaunted ſuch heav'nly ſtrains,
As e'en beguil'd my everlaſting cares,
And for a moment lull'd my ſoul to peace—
I could diſcover by mine art, that 'twas
Around Elvida's tent this faithful band
Thus watch'd—Diſguſted at the ſight, I turn'd,
And ſoon reſum'd my courſe; for having loſt

All

All hopes of happineſs ourſelves, we view
With looks malignant ev'ry happier being.

GUNHILDA.

Can this be poſſible?

WITCH.

It ſurely is.
Nor dare I to pervade the hallow'd circle,
Leſt I be driven by her pow'rful guards
To the extremeſt border of the globe;
Where I ſhould howl for ages unreliev'd.

GUNHILDA.

Thou alſo art combin'd againſt Gunhilda—
But 'tis no matter—Take this, and buy thee needfuls.
[*Preſents a purſe.*

WITCH.

I thank your goodneſs, but our maſter pays us;
And that with an unſparing hand—Adieu.
[*Exit groaning.*

GUNHILDA.

Fooliſh old hag!—Age has beſotted thee;
And thou would'ſt palm on my credulity
Thy viſionary dreams for real truths—
But as thou can'ſt not aid me, I will find
Some other method to effect my wiſhes—
I will prepare a poiſon'd bowl, and ere
Her careful lover is aware, by fraud,
By bribes, or force, with my own hand convey
The deadly juices to my rival's lips.

CHORUS *of* FURIES, *without.*

Proceed, great queen, proceed;
Nor by the deadlieſt deed
Thy daring hand be ſtaid;
Succeſs, and ſure renown,
The vengeful plans ſhall crown,
Which we malignly aid.
Proceed, great queen, proceed.

[*Scene cloſes.*

SCENE

SCENE V. *The Foreſt of Selwood.*

Enter ALFRED *and* ODUN *in their proper Habits, attended by* EDWYN, LORDS, *and* TROOPS.

ALFRED.

Having, thro' our diſguiſe, found means to trace
(As ye already know) the utmoſt verge
Of their extenſive lines, and noted well
Thoſe parts which are the moſt aſſailable,
I now will lead you on, while yet our foes,
From their exceſs, inebriated lie,
Nor dream that danger is ſo near at hand.

EDWYN.

Oh wiſh'd-for hour!—Now can I ſhow how well
I love my king, my country, and my Emma.

ALFRED.

Let all the orders I ſhall iſſue, be
Honour'd with the moſt minute obſervance—
And recollect, my friends, that on this hour
Depend your laws, your liberties, and lives.
Each ſhould conſider that he is engag'd
In the defence of all that he holds dear;
And let me add, of one, who bears towards you
A father's love; a tender father's love.

Firſt LORD.

Had each of us a thouſand lives thrice told,
With pleaſure would we lay them down, to ſerve
So good a king.

ODUN.

My aged ſinews are rebrac'd.

EDWYN.

And mine are tremulous thro' my impatience.

ALFRED.

Silent and circumſpect be our approach—
Th' attack begun, let not Hyrcanian tygers
Exceed us in our fury—But even then,

Remember we are Chriſtians ; nor let
One wanton act of cruelty diſgrace
That ſacred name—I need no more—come on !—
Elvida be the word. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. *The Daniſh Camp.*

GOTHRUM. *Solus.*

Warm from the feſtive board, my hated rival
Haſtens alone towards Elvida's tent,
And will, I fear, by violence ſucceed—
I ſcorn the aſſaſſin's part ; but it muſt be ;
No other hand can do the deed ſo well—
I'll follow him, and juſt as he o'erpow'rs
The ſinking fair one I will interfere ;
And, if his boaſted ſpells prevent me not,
Soon put a fatal period to his love. [*Exit.*

SCENE VII. *Elvida's Pavilion.*

ELVIDA *and* EMMA.

ELVIDA.

What means this univerſal trepidation ?
Sure ſome important criſis in my fate
Is now at hand—To thee, Great Source of Good,
Again thy ſuppliant for protection flies,—
Hah!

Enter HALDANE, *abruptly.*

HALDANE.

Nay ſtart not at a ſight, ungen'rous queen,
That ought to give thee joy—Great Haldane comes
To ſpend an hour in gentle dalliance with thee ;
Therefore diſmiſs thy favourite attendant.

ELVIDA.

Oh! how ſhall I ſupport this dreaded hour!

HALDANE.

HALDANE.

Encircled in my arms—Begone I ſay! [*To Emma*

EMMA, *kneeling.*

Oh! ſpare my royal miſtreſs—

HALDANE.

Begone intruder!—
My paſſion will admit of no delay—

ELVIDA, *kneeling.*

Let me conjure thee by the gods you ſerve—
By her to whom thou haſt been long conjoin'd
In ſacred bands—by ev'ry ſocial tye—
Spare, ſpare my honour—take my worthleſs life;
But rob me not of what I prize above
The world's whole empire.

HALDANE.

Thy tears are vain—
They but augment the flame—

Enter GOTHRUM, *in haſte.*

Why this intruſion?

GOTHRUM.

All, all is loſt! taking advantage of our feſtival,
And the relaxed caution of our guards,
The Saxon king, whom we thought quite depreſs'd,
Has thro' them forced his way into our camp;
And like a roaring lion ruſhes on,
Strewing his paths with blood and mangled limbs.

HALDANE.

Curſes light on his head!—curs'd be the guards!—
And curs'd be all that dare oppoſe my will!—
Could he not have deferr'd another hour
This unexpected viſit?—But we will go,
And with a few repel the raſh invader—
And as for thee, expect me ſoon again. [*To* ELVIDA.
Reeking with Alfred's blood, I will return,

And in deſpite of all thy tears and ſhrieks,
Compleat my interrupted purpoſes.

Exeunt HALDANE *and* GOTHRUM.

ELVIDA.

Kind heav'n avert thy threat—I will retire,
And during this important interval
Which gives me life or death, aid thee, my love,
('Tis only thus I can) with my beſt pray'rs. [*Scene cloſes.*

SCENE VIII. *Part of the Daniſh Camp.*

Enter HALDANE, GOTHRUM, *and* TROOPS, *bearing the magical ſtandard of the Danes, on which is embroidered the figure of a Raven.*

HALDANE.

We are enough to ſtop this braggart's courſe—
This way the ſlaughter lies—Come on—
Our raven droops to day—But that daunts not.
Shielded by ſpells more ſure than burniſh'd arms,
Fate I defy the ſharpeſt of thy darts.

GOTHRUM. *Aſide*

My Saxon rival once diſpatch'd, my arm
May find a way, unheeded, to thy heart. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX. *A different Part of the Camp.*

Enter ALFRED, ODUN, EDWYN, *and* TROOPS.

Trumpets ſound.

ALFRED.

This avenue leads to the royal tent—
Gallop not thus, O Phœbus! to thy bed;
But ſpare me yet ſufficient of thy rays
To find the tyrant out; that on his head
Alfred may ſhow'r his fierceſt wrath; and there
Repay at once his injur'd ſubjects' wrongs. [*Exit.*

EDWYN.

EDWYN.

Nor ſhall my youthful feet lag far behind. [*Exit.*

Enter Earl ETHELRED.

ETHELRED.

While thro' the camp, in all her noiſy pomp,
Confuſion rides, I've ſhaken off my bonds,
And with my utmoſt ſpeed ſought out your ranks.
This ſword I ſnatch'd from a dead Saxon's hand:
And with it will revenge its maſter's death.

ODUN.

Welcome, my brave old friend! here, ſide by ſide,
We'll let theſe ſtriplings ſee we ſtill can fight,
Although our arms are much unnerv'd by age—
Come on. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE X. *Another part of the Camp.*

Enter GOTHRUM, *meeting* ALFRED.

GOTHRUM.

Hah! Alfred! the man I ſooneſt wiſh'd to meet—
Have at thy heart—Elvida now is mine.
For learn, miſtaken king! no mortal arm
Can reach the ſpell-bound life of Gothrum.

ALFRED.

The pow'rful name which thou haſt juſt repeated,
Unbinds all charms oppos'd to Alfred's ſword—
See how it operates— [*They fight,* GOTHRUM *falls.*

GOTHRUM.

It does indeed—
Curſed magician! [*Dies.*

Enter HALDANE.

HALDANE.

From rank to rank has Haldane ſought thee, Alfred!

ALFRED.

ALFRED.

As gladly am I found; for full as earneſtly
Have my revengeful eyeballs ſearch'd for thee—
Come on; nor diſappoint my vengeance;
And I will greet thy ear with harſher ſtrains
Than thoſe I gave thee from my harp to-day.

HALDANE.

Hah!—was that Alfred?—But I diſregard
Thy vaunts; for 'tis not in thy pow'r to harm
My ſpell-protected frame— [*Sees the body of* GOTHRUM.
What do I ſee?
Can that be him, whom I have always held
Invincibly begirt, like me, with charms?

ALFRED.

It ſurely is—and if thou too art bound
With the ſecureſt ſpells that magic owns,
I ſoon will let thee ſee how vain they are.

HALDANE. *Aſide*

He more than mortal ſeems—I did not think
The heart of Haldane could be ſo diſmay'd.

ALFRED.

There is but one that ſafely can protect;
And they who claim his care, muſt come enwrap'd
In Virtue's ſacred mantle—But wherefore thus
Does my uplifted ſword ſo long delay
Its fatal purpoſe—Hark! Elvida calls—
My ſlaughter'd ſubjects all demand the blow.
[*They fight, and* HALDANE *falls.*

HALDANE.

Riven be thy arm!—It cannot, ſhall not be—
Yet 'tis too true—Now to my coſt I find,
That all the ſorc'rer's flatt'ring promiſes
Are lighter far than air—I thought to have
Return'd, and triumph'd in Elvida's arms—

But

But oh! the fates forbid—I will not die—
Grim death let go thy hold—Curs'd, curs'd be all—
[*Dies.*

ALFRED.

Thus untam'd dies the ſavage infidel;
And with unfiniſh'd curſes on his lips.
How great a contraſt to our holy faith!
Which bids its vot'ries, with their lateſt breath,
Bleſs e'en their foes.

Enter EDWYN *and ſome* TROOPS.

ALFRED.

There lie the Daniſh chiefs—
However, let us not a moment waſte,
But haſten to ſecure my captive love
From ev'ry caſual harm—This way my friends—

EDWYN.

And that way alſo lies the Cynoſure
To which my wiſhes point; the lovely Emma! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE XI. *Elvida's Pavilion.*

ELVIDA, EMMA, *and attendant* SPIRIT.

ELVIDA.

I've ſupplicated every ſaint, and now
In breathleſs expectation wait the event—
The trumpet's ſound grows louder on my ear,
And this way ſeems to bend the noiſy tumult.

Enter GUNHILDA, *bearing a Bowl of Poiſon.*

ELVIDA.

Good heav'ns! what new diſaſter is at hand,
Juſt as my languid hopes begin to bloom!

GUNHILDA.

Leſt, from the various delays of war,
Thy Haldane ſhould not ſoon return, I've brought
A cordial

A cordial draught to cheer thy drooping ſpirits;
Such as th' Egyptian gave to peerleſs Helen.

ELVIDA.

My Haldane!—

GUNHILDA.

Yes! diſſembling traitreſs! thine.
I know too well the arts thou haſt employ'd
To gain from me my Haldane's wonted love—
But drink and let us henceforth live in friendſhip.

ELVIDA.

I have not been thy foe, and therefore need
No reconciling draught to drown my hatred.

GUNHILDA.

Drink then to drive away that ſad dejection
Which dwells upon thy beauteous countenance.

ELVIDA.

It is not Haldane's abſence that dejects
My lab'ring mind—Nor do my ſorrows lie
Within the reach of the moſt balmy mixture—
I therefere will not drink.

GUNHILDA.

Nor I no longer feign—
Thinkſt thou Gunhilda's haughty ſoul would ſtoop
To bring a hated rival any good?
Know that this bowl contains a deadly potion,
Whoſe juice will ſoon ſuſpend thy vital pow'rs,
And from my boſom root each jealous fear.
Drink or receive my poniard in thy breaſt.

Holds the Bowl in one hand, and the Poniard in the other.

EDVIDA.

Oh! Alfred! Alfred!—

Enter ALFRED, EDWYN, *and* TROOPS.

ALFRED.

See, I obey thy call—

Fear

Fear not, my love, thy Alfred will protect thee
From ev'ry future harm.

ELVIDA.

My deareſt lord!—
Thus let me preſs thee to my enraptur'd heart,
And hold thee there forever—Eternal pow'rs!
Accept th' effuſions of a grateful mind
For this unhop'd reverſe.

ALFRED.

Thy Alfred joins
His fervid thanks with thine—The vanquiſh'd Danes
Now ſtrew in ſlaughter'd heaps each avenue
Of this extenſive camp. And on the battlements
The drooping raven ſtreams beneath the croſs.
Haldane no more of magic arms ſhall boaſt,
He breathleſs lies, with Gothrum by his ſide.

GUNHILDA.

What helliſh ſound is this which ſtrikes mine ear!—
Then has Gunhilda nothing more to do
With love or life.—Her jealous fears are o'er—
Haldane, I now forgive thy perfidy;
And with this draught obliterate all my wrongs.
(*Drinks the Poiſon.*
I will employ the little I have left
Of ſtrength or voice in curſes on thy foes—
May wrinkles furrow that bewitching face
Which firſt ſeduc'd him from his nuptial ties—
Wither'd be the arm that robb'd him of his life—
And ev'ry ill light on the Saxon race—
Is this the ſure ſucceſs, this the renown,
You promis'd me, ye ſubtle perjur'd Demons?
Doubled and never-ceaſing be your torments—
The poiſon racks—I hear their fluttering wings—
Take your deluded victim— [*Dies.*

ELVIDA.

Bear her away—
Unhappy queen! The Demons that miſled you,
Were aided by your own impetuous paſſions—
But may you reſt in peace— [*Gunhilda borne off.*

Enter ETHELRED *and* ODUN.

ALFRED.

Behold, Elvida,
Your noble father, and our faithful Odun;
Who like unrazor'd boys have fought to-day,
And claim no trivial ſhare of our renown.

EDWYN.

Now, Emma, can I boldly aſk thy hand,
As I have this day won it.

ODUN.

She's thine, brave youth!

EMMA.

Be it my life's employment to reward
With unfeign'd love thy conſtancy and valour.

Attendant SPIRIT, *aſide, while the other Characters are employed in Congratulations.*

My taſk now done, for by my miniſt'ring hand,
And not by fortune's caſual command,
Have pride and luſt their due correction found,
And ſuff'ring virtue with ſucceſs been crown'd,
I'll take my flight to the empyreal gate
Of the Moſt-High; and there expectant wait,
Till I receive, well-pleas'd, ſome new beheſt,
And viſit earth again to ſuccour the diſtreſt. [*Exit.*

ALFRED.

How varied is the tranſient life of man!
He who delights to cheer the humble heart,
Has taken from my hand the neatherd's ſtaff
I lately bore, and in its ſtead replac'd,
(My foes in turn brought low) the regal ſceptre.—
To him, as duty bids, will we firſt pay
Our general acknowledgements—That done,
We'll clear this harraſs'd land of its invaders;
And then recall the ſciences and arts,
Now ſeeking ſhelter in another clime.

Theſe

Theſe, with her laws reſtor'd; that boaſted ſyſtem
Which I have toil'd to rear; England ſhall be
Once more the envy of each neighb'ring ſtate;
And Alfred in her happineſs be happy—
But not by theſe concerns, however pleaſing,
Shall my attention wholly be abſorb'd.
Elvida too ſhall ſhare in my regards,
Doubly endear'd by her late virtuous ſtruggles.
And as we gently ſail together down
The ſtream of life, theſe ſufferings will ſerve
To give a greater reliſh to our joys—
From theſe events, when on th' hiſtoric page
They ſtand recorded, ſhall future ages learn
What may be done, e'en by a few brave men,
Firmly united in an honeſt cauſe;
Their country, rights, or liberty, at ſtake—
This little Iſle, were all her ſons but true,
Tho' the whole world aſſail'd her, might defy
Their utmoſt force, and ſcoff at their invaſions—
And Alfred's life to future Kings ſhall prove
That their beſt ſafe-guard is their Subjects love.

[*Exeunt Omnes.*

THE END.

EPILOGUE.

WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR OF THE PIECE,
In the Year 1779.
AND INTENDED TO HAVE BEEN SPOKEN BY
Mrs. YATES, *in the Character of the Tragic Muſe.*

SAD, doubly ſad, before you weeping ſtands
Melpomene!—No longer grace her hands
The emblematic Dagger and the Bowl,
But round her wrapp'd, in haſte, her blackeſt ſtole,
With timid ſtep ſhe comes to tell her grief,
And from this gen'rous circle hopes relief.
My ſiſter Muſe, (Thalia is her name)
A light, vain, wanton girl, of ſullied fame,
Thro' folly's devious mazes apt to rove,
Has lately robb'd me of your valu'd love;
And with her air-wrought ſpells ſecurely binds
Your eaſy, careleſs, unſuſpicious minds.
Charm'd by the tinkling of her bells, ſhe leads
Your hoodwink'd judgement whereſoe'er ſhe treads.
As late I wept o'er Garrick's honour'd bier,
And drew from ev'ry eye a heart-felt tear;
(Garrick! my own lov'd ſon,) I little thought
Her arts this revolution would have wrought.
How oft, with mingled profit and delight,
Has his enchanting tongue beguil'd the night
With tales of woe, and ſolemn ſcenes of death,
In Romeo, Richard, Jaffier, and Macbeth!
Arous'd each noble impulſe of the mind,
Your hearts amended, and your ſenſe refin'd!

Then

Then too would Agincourt or Creſſy's field
To Britain's ſons a martial leſſon yield;
Ye view'd with ardour the ſucceſsful fight,
And, panting, long'd to realize the ſight.
Shall it be ſaid, that you who thus could glow
With ſympathetic warmth at others woe;
With rapture hear the animating ſtory
Of your fore-father's deeds and well-earn'd glory,
Can only reliſh now a lively air,
Or ſuch light ſcenes as tend to baniſh care?
Become a frivolous, unthinking age,
Pleas'd with the verieſt trifles of the ſtage;
Unmindful of the Drama's ſacred end;
Who, virtue's handmaid, plays but to amend?—
Your ſmiles convince me the deluſion's o'er;
My ſiſter will, I ſee, miſlead no more.
Their native dignity your minds regain,
And ſcorn thoſe ſcenes which merely entertain.
Such as are giv'n to-night, henceforth you'll chuſe,
And to your wonted love reſtore the Tragic Muſe.

ERRORS OF THE PRESS.

Page 8. Line 5. for viciffitudes, read *viciſſitudes*.
Page 11. Line 15. for pluck'd each, read pluck'd *up* each.
Page 15. Line 16. for reſignatien, read *reſignation*.
Page 21. Line 7. for and a deed, read and *in* a deed.
Page 28, Line the laſt, for diſh, read *diſhonour'd*.
Page 30. Line 14. for bids, the live, read bids *thee* live.
Page 41. Line 23. for bound the not, read bound *thee* not.
Page 64. Line 14. for therefere, read *therefore*.

WORKS, *by the ſame* AUTHOR.

The Life of King Alfred. Dedicated (by Permiſſion) to Earl Mansfield.

The Hiſtory of Edward the Black Prince. Inſcribed to his Royal Highneſs the Prince of Wales.

The Hiſtory of Lady Anne Neville. A Novel in two Volumes. Dedicated (by Permiſſion) to her Grace the Dutcheſs of Kingſton.

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A Monody (after the manner of Milton's Lycidas) on the Death of Mr. Linley, Junior.

More Odes upon Odes; or a Peep at Peter Pindar; or Falſhood detected; or What you will.

K.

Greathead (B)